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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

An Address

By JOHN D. LONG

AT THE
CENTENNIAL IN SYMPHONY HALL, BOSTON

February 12, 1909

W. B. CLARKE COMPANY

26 AND 28 TREMONT STREET

BOSTON

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slaved or weak and erring brother! And beneath that proverbial wit which so often lighted it there lay also the fountain of tears. An exquisite pathos breathed from the chords of a sympathetic, softly attuned nature, as if you caught from them the sensitive wistful tones of Schumann's "Träumerei."

It is an unfounded notion that the conditions of our frontier life—alas! we no longer have any frontier—are to be counted unfavorable. On the contrary, they have been, from the days when Massachusetts was herself a frontier, the best soil for characteristic American ambition and growth. There are those who express surprise that Lincoln was the product of what they deem the narrow and scanty environment from which he sprang. As well wonder at the giant of the forest, deep rooted, bathing its top in the upper air, fearless of scorch of sun or blast of tempest, sprung from the fertile soil and luxuriant growth of the virgin earth, and rich with the fragrance and glory of nature's paradise! I can hardly think of a life more fortunate. The Lincolns settled in Hingham Massachusetts a few years after the coming of the Mayflower. The family ranks with our early Puritan nobility of worth and character. One branch of it migrated to Pennsylvania and thence to Virginia. More than a hundred years ago Lincoln's grandfather went thence to Kentucky, built a log cabin, cleared a farm, and was killed by Indians. Lincoln's father was of the same sort, pioneer, farmer, hunter, uneducated but in touch with the sturdy qualities that were the mark of the Kentucky settlers. His mother, dying in his early boyhood, was a woman of beauty, of character,

and of education enough to teach her husband to write his name. His stepmother, saintly Christian soul, sheltered the orphan under her loving care and, scanty as was their lot, allured him to brighter worlds and led the way. Compared with the luxurious profusion of to-day, it was wretched and hopeless poverty; but, compared with the standard of the then neighborhood and time,—the only right standard,—it was the independence of men who owned the land, who strode masters of the soil, who were barons, not serfs, who were equal with their associates, and among whom the child Abraham Lincoln, eating his bread and milk from a wooden bowl as he sat on the threshold of his father's cabin, one side of it wide open to the weather, was no more an object of despair or pity than the babe who, cradled among the flags by the river's brink, dreamed of the hosts of Israel to whom he should reveal the tables of the law of God, and whom he should lead to the green pastures of the promised land. It is not because the same or like qualities of character do not still inhere in human nature that America—nay, the world—will never again see the like of Lincoln, but because the circumstances of his early and later life can never be reproduced. America, alas! has already grown old,—old with power, with wealth, with the exhausting ravage and absorption of her territory, and with the infusions of what we used to call the Old World. The frame-setting of Abraham Lincoln's youth is as absolutely gone as the great American desert, now a garden, or the buffalo and his Indian chaser, now ghosts of a dream.

Nor is it true that Lincoln had no education in his

boyhood. He, indeed, went little to school, yet he learned to read, write, and cipher; and what more does any school-boy learn to-day? "Reading," says Bacon, summing up education, "maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man." All these had the youth Abraham Lincoln. With them he stood at the gate of all treasures, key in hand, as much master of the future as a graduate of Yale or Harvard. He knew the Bible thoroughly, Æsop's Fables, Pilgrim's Progress, Robinson Crusoe, the lives of Washington and Henry Clay, Burns and later Shakespeare. He not only read them with the eye, but made them a part of his mind. The list is small, but it is a range of history and poetry. Washington and Clay may well have been the spur of Lincoln's ambitious Americanism; the Bible and Burns, of his inspiration and sentiment and unexcelled style; Æsop's Fables and Pilgrim's Progress, of his aptness of illustration.

The incidents of his early life are few, but suggestive. At nineteen he made a trip down the Mississippi River on a flat-boat to New Orleans, and there sold a cargo,—a trip of larger education than Thomas Jefferson had ever taken at the same age. A year later his father, who for four years had been living in Indiana, went to Illinois; and the boy, driving the ox-team which bore all the household goods, helping build the home of logs and split the rails of the farm fence,—those rails so famous afterwards,—was thus a resident of three States of the Union before his majority, three States representing the very growth of his magnificent country. Coming of age, he made a second flat-boat descent to New Orleans. It was there he saw for the

first time the chaining, whipping, and sale of negroes, and it may be that the impression then made inspired those immortal words in his second inaugural:—

“Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may soon pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn with the sword,—as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, ‘The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.’”

Returning to Illinois, he was clerk in a village store, which meant again opportunities by no means suffering under comparison with those of a college graduate of to-day in a lawyer’s or broker’s office in the city. It meant constant discussion of political, religious, and social questions. It meant a struggle for mastery in physical exercise and grocery store debate. At twenty-three, in the Black Hawk War, Lincoln was captain of a military company,—another step in large American life. Then he “kept store,” where his honesty won him the name of “Honest Abe.” At twenty-four he was postmaster of the village,—in other words, the centre and conduit of its intelligence. All this time he was absorbing every book he could get, learning law and mathematics, and, when his store became a failure, supported himself by surveying. He had already engaged in political life, often addressed his fellow-citizens with telling effect, was defeated as a candidate for the Illinois House of Representatives when twenty-three, and elected at twenty-five.

Review this first chapter, and tell me where can be found a better preparation for an American career. To what one of whom we call the favored youths of the land have not his splendid advantages of social position and university education sometimes seemed an obstacle rather than a help in the path that leads through the popular hedge to the popular service? Hard lines! Lincoln's is rather one of the illustriously fortunate careers of young men. The accidents of hard manual toil, scanty living, no money, splitting of rails, are only the paint and pasteboard of the scene, the tricks with which rhetoric loves to embellish the contrasts of a eulogy. "A man's a man for a' that."

Lincoln was re-elected three times to the legislature, serving with Douglas and others who, like himself, became afterwards famous. He identified himself with anti-slavery measures, protesting with only one other associate, at a time when even a protest was almost political martyrdom, against the extremities of pro-slavery. Meantime he went into the practice of the law, where again his opportunity was large. Each county had its court-house and this, rude as it might be, was always, in the absence of other attractions,—and there were few other attractions,—the centre of popular interest and attendance, the arena for advocacy and trial. From one to another the lawyers rode a circuit. Among them were some of the brightest men of the time, afterwards potent in national councils, among whom Lincoln's genius of homely power soon bore him to the front, a favorite alike with clients and the bar. With this came still further prominence in all public range. He delivered lectures on politics, temperance, literature,

and inventions. He was a favorite on the stump. An ardent Henry Clay Whig, he was often pitted against Douglas and other Democratic leaders. He was a moving spirit in the Harrison campaign of 1840 and the Clay and Polk campaign in 1844, being on the Illinois Whig electoral ticket each time, the second time at its head. In 1848, as afterwards just before the war, he spoke in New England. When, therefore, either as a matter of reproach or apotheosis, his candidacy for the Presidency in 1860 is referred to as that of an unknown Illinois rail-splitter, it is well enough to remember that some twenty years before that time he was among the foremost men in his region, as from 1855 to 1861 he was the foremost popular champion of anti-slavery principles in the North-west.

In 1847 he entered the 30th Congress of the United States. There he introduced and vigorously advocated pungent resolutions concerning the Mexican War and a bill to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, —a measure which afterwards became law by his Presidential approval. For the next decade he devoted himself mainly to the law, in which he earned a modest competence.

Had his life ended here, it would have been a fortunate and successful life, indeed, but we should not be celebrating it to-day. But it did not end here. This was only the vestibule opening into the temple of the Lord, where he was to be at once the high priest and the sacrifice.

Since our national independence began, there have been three great eras: first, the adoption of the Constitution under Madison and Hamilton; second, its

construction by interpretation under Marshall and Webster, which gave the Federal Union a larger range of sovereignty than its strict letter; and, third, the exercise of that sovereignty, resulting in the entirety of the republic, the abolition of slavery, and the equality of citizenship under Abraham Lincoln. Of this last era Lincoln was a typical spokesman and representative more than any other man. Other men may have at times more brilliantly illuminated the path. He, by force of circumstances and his own force, was the path itself. Seward stated, but Lincoln both stated and cut the Gordian knot of the irrepressible conflict.

The founders of our constitutional government expected the early extinction of slavery. Side by side Northerner and Southerner, Jefferson and Franklin, argued for its restriction. Their anticipations were not fulfilled. The cotton interest became identified with the possession and extension of slave labor. The slave power was the nerve centre of the southern half of the United States and, for a period, of our whole political system. It infibred Northern pecuniary interests in its mesh, and they became *pro tanto* sharers in the responsibility for it. For years it dominated the national government. It added new States to its circle. It fought to keep equal pace with the institutions of freedom. It repealed compromises that barred its loathsome efflux upon the fair territorial lands on which the sunlight of liberty was dawning. It recaptured its fugitive slaves in Northern capitals. It threatened the Union when the eagle of freedom shrieked. And at last, under the Dred Scott decision, it claimed protection and the right of enslavement even in the

territories. There was but one step more, and that was that the slave-owner might marshal his slaves in the free States themselves,—ay, even under the shadow of Bunker Hill. The crisis had come, indeed. In short, as Lincoln put it in those memorable words, “A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe that this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will be all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, north as well as south.”

Stephen A. Douglas, senator from Illinois, one of the most forcible men in our history, had taken the ground, called the doctrine of Squatter Sovereignty, that the people of a Territory should decide for themselves whether slavery should exist there or not. Plausible as it seemed, it ignored the slave, and Lincoln exploded it with the simple formula that it amounted simply to this, “That, if any one man chose to enslave another, no third man shall be allowed to object.” Grant, as he did, that slavery had a constitutional existence in the slave States where it was established, yet the moment it sought to enslave any human being in the Territories of the United States it became there **an** unwarranted crime against humanity, and the government was bound in conscience and in duty to resist it by every means in its power, and to keep the national Territories for the homes and shrines of freedom. From 1854 to 1861 the debate between these great gladiators raged. The gory

battlefields of history are not so inspiring as this battle between conscience and crime. Neither of the men was fifty years old, both sons of the farm, makers of their own fortunes, leaders of the people speaking to millions of their countrymen, and standing, one of Northern birth for the right of the extension of slavery, the other Southern born for its restriction and for a Union which should cease to be divided and thereby ultimately become all free.

It was not a matter of chance that Lincoln was the champion of freedom. That he was so proves the steady preparation and the commanding talents which fitted him for the place. By the Illinois legislature of 1855 he had come very near to be chosen United States senator; and at the Republican National Convention in 1856 he received 110 votes as candidate for the Vice-Presidency on the part of the Republican party, of which meantime he had become one of the founders, and of which he was thenceforth in the North-west the undoubted leader. At its conventions in Illinois he was its spokesman, and in 1858 contested with Douglas before the people the issue of the next United States senatorship. It was in this contest that Lincoln challenged Douglas to a series of six joint debates, which are the most remarkable and influential of their kind in American, if not in all forensic, history. Nor was it by any means a one-sided contest, either in the matter of the debate or of the men who debated it. Here, again, do not count Lincoln less than he was. He was now a master thoroughly equipped for the discussion. It is doubtful whether his superior for that work could have been found in the whole country. Massachusetts,

New York, Ohio, and other States were rich in material; but which of their orators, what Sumner or Seward or Chase, could have brought to that arena of the plain people the lance or mail that would have made or met the charge like his?

It is a time in Lincoln's life to be dwelt upon, because then was the formative process of public sentiment, of which his administration later was the expression. In this great debate he planted his feet on the rock of the Declaration of Independence, which had always been and always was his political philosophy and faith. Again and again, at this time and forever after, he returned to it. Its imperishable inspiration to him was Union and Liberty,—first, the entirety of an indissoluble union, which must be either all slave or all free, but which, second, must be all free because “all men are created equal.”

Ah, those old anti-slavery days which, so swift is time, not many of you here recall! Not even the lustre of the Revolutionary period bursting into national independence shone with such beauty of holiness, such moral effulgence, such ardor for the enfranchisement, not of a nation conscious only of general mild subjection to laws in the making of which it did not have direct representation, but of a proletariat of poor, despised, enslaved but fellow human beings. It is this which makes the anti-slavery crusade the era of our New England chivalry. Then its true knight couched his lance and its minstrel sang. It brought not peace, but a sword. It nerved the iron will of Garrison, who would not equivocate and who would be heard. It rang from the lips of Phillips, that Puri-

tan Apollo, more beautiful than the son of Latona and higher-bred, whose tongue was his lute and whose swift shaft was winged with the immortal fire of liberty. It pointed the rhyme of Lowell, and transformed a Boston Brahmin into a Down East Bird of Freedom. It made Whittier the expression in verse of New England's intense and passionate impulse for freedom and for breaking all chains that bind the limb or mind of any brother man,—an unplumed knight in Quaker garb. It throbbed with magnetic fervor in the heart of Andrew. It inspired the pen of Mrs. Stowe. Electrified by her genius, the great popular heart thrilled with veneration and sympathy for the meek and lowly Christian in bondage, Uncle Tom. Its heroisms fired the student, and Harvard and her sisters were again the mothers of heroes. Its passion culminated in the immortal hymn of Mrs. Howe, and cried aloud,—

“Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.”

But why name these and not also the dwellers in unnumbered homes of plain living and high thinking all over the land, under the shadow of Plymouth Rock, and along the sea and among the farms, as well as in the abodes of culture and wealth, peers of the exaltation of their leaders, kindled with equal enthusiasm for human rights, fired with the reformer's zeal, and later giving themselves and their sons a sacrifice upon the altar of their faith on the field of battle and of blood? As Christ died to make men holy, so they died to make men free. All honor to them and to you their veteran surviving comrades here to-night!

It was, indeed, the era of the tumultuous upheaval

of the moral sense. It was the burst of the thunder-cloud, and its lightnings fell and its rains descended and its floods poured, and the house built upon the sand of inhumanity fell, and great was the fall thereof. Of course there were extravagances and extremists. Bitterness and passion and sectional inflammations raged, but above them, as we look back, like Neptune rising above the tumult of the waves, the figure of Lincoln dominates the scene. His voice is calm, but reaches all abroad. It gathers the bolts of the storm into his hand. He gives utterance to the great underlying public sentiment of the time. He becomes the embodiment of the common sense. Others may have more passionately stirred and inflamed the popular heart. He stirred, but also guided it. Patiently, but surely, he led the way, and at the last his was the hand that struck the fetters from the slave. Well is it that Boston, through the munificence of one of her citizens, has in one of her busy public squares set up his statue beside which a kneeling slave, just set free, forgets the broken fetters at his feet as with adoring eyes he looks up into the face, and bends beneath the benediction of the hand, of his Christ and Saviour.

In the contest with Douglas, Lincoln won the popular vote, Douglas the legislature and the senatorship. But it meant for Lincoln the Presidency. His fame was now national. In 1859 he spoke in Kansas, the daughter of the anti-slavery crusade, a virgin and beautiful Andromeda, whose rescue was the death-knell of the monster of slavery, to whom she had been exposed. In the same year he spoke memorably in Ohio. In February, 1860, he made his famous speech at the

Cooper Institute in New York City, and thereby won the Presidency from the East. It is a picture worth recalling. The boy of the farm, the splitter of rails, the country storekeeper and postmaster, the peripatetic surveyor too poor to own his instruments, the circuit lawyer, the stump speaker and lank humorist of the prairie who had recently won his spurs in the open-air debate with Douglas, stood before the culture and enterprise of the metropolis of the New World. His presiding officer was Bryant, poet and patriot,—our Bryant. His platform was arrayed with the most eminent merchants, scholars, lawyers, clergymen, business men, of the city. His audience was the critical intelligence of America. There was no doubt a kindly, half-patronizing curiosity to hear an uncouth champion of the West, who had crossed swords with the “Little Giant.” If so, it quickly turned to the discriminating admiration which an Athenian audience might have felt and expressed as the orator rose to his theme, and in the pure and simple eloquence of candor, with an entire mastery of his subject, delivered an address which planted the Republican sentiment of the nation on an impregnable foundation. Lincoln’s speeches became thenceforth the ready-at-hand material of every New England fireside.

Under these circumstances his nomination as the Republican candidate for the Presidency in 1860 was the natural evolution of events. It was the selection of the one man who in the popular mind, by and large, represented the national protest against the aggression of the slave power in the South and of subservience to it in the North, who could rally alike in East

and West the strongest popular vote, and who could best hold together the patriotic sentiment of the free States themselves when the shock of war should come, not only rending apart North and South, but endangering even in the North the harmony of its common allegiance. At the convention held in Chicago, May, 1860, Lincoln was nominated on the third ballot, and in the following November elected to the Presidency.

Never in the history of the Union was there a more critical and gloomy time than the interval between Lincoln's election in November and his inauguration in March. The attempted dissolution of the republic had come. Webster's prophetic nightmare was now a living horror. The helm of state wavered in the palsied hand of Buchanan. State after State seceded. Faithless and dishonest cabinet officers were honeycombing the military and naval strength of the federal government. Treason plotted in the capital. The very life of the President-elect was in danger when he left his home and made his way to Washington. His inaugural marked the new era in his life,—a new departure, sometimes disappointing his friends, but approved by the result and signalizing the greatness of the man,—a greatness sufficient to adapt itself to new exigencies, to comprehend the whole vast situation, and to direct the thunderbolts of the storm. Up to this time he had been the charging and resistless advocate and prophet. He was now the cautious and deliberate administrator. He had approved himself the genius of the spoken conscience. He was now to approve himself the wise master of situations, responsibilities, and expedencies. He had been among the foremost to court the peril

of driving the Ship of State into the angry straits. Now at the helm, he was the careful pilot, shy of Scylla, on the one hand, and of Charybdis, on the other. He who had seemed the boldest was now often censured as timid and as withholding his hand from the plough. He had been the outspoken antagonist of the slave power. Now he seemed fearful lest he should invade its slightest constitutional right. For forever in his mind was the purpose of the Declaration of Independence,—the Union of the States, with liberty its corner-stone. Of this Union he remembered that he had been elected President, and that on him—on him, perhaps, alone—was the awful responsibility of its preservation unbroken. To this duty he seemed to feel himself bound to sacrifice all else. The crisis that faced him was the crisis of that Union on the point of disruption, and to avert that peril he bent everything. Eleven States had seceded. If the border slave States, which with good reason he believed to hold the balance of power, should secede also, the breach would be irreparable and the Union at an end. Because of this, caution and prudence, especially in dealing with the slave problem, were the characteristics of his early administration, sometimes exasperating his warmest supporters and the enthusiastic patriots of the North, but held to with serene and unflinching fidelity because they were the result of profound conviction.

In the light of succeeding events, especially of the early defeat at Bull Run, history justifies him. Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, were never lost, nor Tennessee or Virginia, except in part. The conservative element in the North, on which the Southern leaders

counted confidently, was kept in line till that line was beyond breaking. I doubt if the world has a nobler or a more pathetic picture than that of President Lincoln in those days,—that magnanimous soul, that spirit without guile or malice, that prophet among the anti-slavery crusaders whose heart was still as loyal to their cause and as tender of the shackled slave as was that of Garrison or Sumner or Phillips, but consecrated to his great responsibilities as God gave him to see them, superior to the assault of enemies or the impatience of friends, single-eyed to the preservation of the Union because the preservation of the Union involved every hope he cherished for his country, its destruction every calamity which for her he feared. I love to think that in the great providence of compensation God meantime gave him to know that he was right, as at the end he knew it when he walked the streets of Richmond one April day, preserver of the Union, emancipator of the slave.

Disasters on the field came in those early months thick and fast, like successive overwhelming waves. The unsuccess in command of many a soldier at the head of the army, inadequate to the task, seemed to waste years of agonizing suspense in the swamps of Virginia. But, as the glacier moves, so slowly the resistless forces of freedom moved on. From the West came the victories of Grant, and then Grant himself, who solved the riddle of war by striking the enemies' forces, not by withdrawing his own, but by moving on his adversaries' works immediately, by fighting his campaigns through, and by fighting them out on that line if it took all summer. Complications with foreign nations had been

wisely avoided. Seward, whose services as Secretary of State should never be forgotten, yet had found in Lincoln a more discreet hand than his own in the Trent negotiations, in which the United States, though clearly justified by British precedent and doctrine, yielded its contention hardly more to a prudent policy of conciliation than to its own traditional and more liberal theory of the rights of neutrals on the high seas. The patriotic sentiment of the North had already crystallized under Lincoln's wise prudence into co-operation. The border States were secured. Slavery, surely crumbling under his policy, more surely, it may now in his vindication be said, than if the first blow had been straight betwixt the eyes of the monster, was abolished in the District of Columbia. Colored troops were enlisted, and the freedmen, wearing the uniform of the country of which they were henceforth to be the equal citizens of the Declaration of Independence, were enrolling their names at Wagner and Olustee on the topmast scroll of the heroic dead. Meantime the emancipation of slaves in the loyal States, under a system of compensation, had been considerably urged upon their owners by the President. Indeed, every step was taken to conciliate whatever interest was at stake. And when in September, 1862, he announced his emancipation proclamation, and on the first day of January, 1863, gave it life, the country was ripe for its reception and enforcement as the timely and consummate fruit of God's providence and of the administration's faithful execution of its evolving duty. Then came Gettysburg and Vicksburg and Appomattox; and then that sight,—oh, so pathetic, so full of happy tears,—the Illinois rail-

splitter leading his little son by the hand, God's benediction on his homely face, angels of forgiveness and mercy hovering around him as he walked the streets of Richmond, capital again of the old State of Virginia, capital of the Confederacy no longer, a poor emancipated slave woman kneeling at his feet and showering on them all she had, her kisses and her tears. The Union was preserved. Freedom was the equal right of all its children, white or black. The Declaration of Independence was vindicated. The house had not fallen: it had ceased to be divided; and Abraham Lincoln was forever enshrined in the heart of the republic.

Must it not be said that Abraham Lincoln's war policy, his policy in dealing with slavery as an element in the Union affecting its preservation, was right? When, in time of crisis, God charges a wise man with a special responsibility above his fellows, does he not sometimes give him special wisdom above them also?

The Emancipation Proclamation is Abraham Lincoln's great fame scroll. To have at one stroke of the pen made 4,000,000 slaves free,—to have at one cut ripped the cancer from the republic,—there can be no greater glory in human history. Supplemented by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Federal Constitution, which, as Mr. Mead has said, were "the reduction to law of Lincoln's gospel and Lincoln's life," it is his patent to immortality.

The colored race have every reason to cherish, as they do, the memory of Abraham Lincoln. All that man could do for them he did. They had unnumbered advocates, intense, devoted, true, but none who, in

addition to all else, was so wise as he. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. But Lincoln not only laid down his life for them, but had already given for years the very fullness of it to their uplift. He struck the shackles from their limbs; he struck the more chafing shackles from their souls. He gave them manhood. He made them soldiers of the republic. He pointed them to the paths of education and material thrift, and through these to the fruitions of equal citizenship. He was no fanatic. The Federal Constitution was to him no "league with hell," but the expedient instrument of a blessed union which with patience and wise pressure could yet be moulded into provision for the equal rights under it of all men, whatever their race or color. He did not shut his eyes to racial differences and to the social discriminations which have sprung therefrom. But from the first he held to the faith that the "negro is entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence," and that, "in the right to eat the bread without the leave of anybody else which his own hand earns he is the equal of every living being." Beyond the first step of freedom he was too wise to press the negro forward too rapidly, either for his own good or for the good of the republic. With what seems now the pith of common sense he would give him, as he would have given men of any other race or color, training to fit him for the functions of citizenship. He would have given him education, whether of the school of military service or of the primer or copy book or of industrial attainment, before conferring upon him suffrage during the war, thus making it the expression

of an intelligent and responsible citizenship rather than a premature agency of social disorder and political corruption. He would have deprecated any tidal wave of ignorance and irresponsibility deluging the Southern States and retarding their return not only to national prosperity, but to the sentiment of national union. Had he lived, would he not, with his rare tact, have saved us the blunder of unfitted and swamping immediate universal suffrage too early conferred? Would he rather not have laid the foundations of universal suffrage in such agencies as later have found expression in work like that of Booker Washington? Later and in due season the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Federal Constitution would have followed the Thirteenth, which was adopted during Lincoln's administration, and the three would have been the consummation of his policy. He would have combined, as he always did, the natural rights, whether of the negro or any other citizen, with expedient development in the use and enjoyment of them. Had his policy prevailed, freedom would have meant to the enfranchised slave, not political office or its flamboyant badges and titles, but the bountiful full fruit of the right to eat the bread which his own hand earns, to add to his intellectual and material acquisitions, to prove by his thrift, by his attainments in scholarship, and by his accumulation of property, as he is now so abundantly proving, his capacity for full participation in affairs. The colored citizen would have been saved the humiliation of his early ejection from precipitant political occupation, and would sooner have secured, as he is now securing, that call to political service which

comes, and will hereafter more and more come, to whatever man stands out with evident fitness for it. This is the true future and true aim for the colored race. And this is what Lincoln, their best friend and the best friend of their former masters, would have had them have. Would he could have lived to note their schools and colleges, their wide-spread industries, their men eminent in institutional, professional, and social life, their teachers and poets and novelists, their successful merchants, farmers, and manufacturers! Had he lived, is it too much to say that this rising tide in their affairs would have sooner set in? And, were he living, with what faith would they still turn to him in every contingency, sure of justice at his hands! His legacy to us is the duty of the same justice at our hands. Our tributes to him are but lip-service, if we do not see to it that no tinge of black or red in any man's skin shall be permitted to discriminate him in his rights under the law as a citizen from any other citizen of the Union or of any State in it.

Two adjectives that seem especially to describe Lincoln's relation to the great work to which he was called are "apt" and "adequate." No man ever made less pretence. His integrity and truth were structural, born in him. His magnanimity, his superiority to personal feeling, are almost unparalleled in public life. It animated every impulse. It breathed in his repeated invitations to the Confederate government to personal interviews on terms of peace; in his dealings with his civil and military subordinates when unsuccessful or at fault; in his patience with McClellan, his consideration for Burnside, his wise counsel to Hooker,

his self-effacing disinterestedness towards Chase. It made him quicker to take than to lay blame. And, when at his death, his record was recalled, that magnanimity the whole world recognized. He had conquered its admiration. He had shamed its prejudice and ridicule; and the "scurrile jester," penitent and atoning, was among the first, to his honor be it remembered, to lay his garland on the martyr's grave. His gentleness and tenderness of heart allied him to the very springs of sympathy and opened his ear to the humblest that sought it. A quaint humor flavored his informal speech with a homely relish, and was, as he used to suggest, his safety-valve during those exacting years of the war. It has been exaggerated, no doubt, in the report of it, yet it always kept him in popular *rapport*. More than this, it was a keen instrument, purposely used as such, to carve his way to essential results, either in debate or in administration. It was the humor, not of a clown, but of a diplomatist. In this respect, as also in respect to a seeming waste of his attention in arranging petty details of official patronage with Congressmen and office-seekers who hounded him,—a thing which so unfavorably impressed some men of distinction who sought him on the higher themes of State,—I recall a remark of Mr. Root. It was to the effect that all this was largely the shrewd method, where no other would serve, of that conciliation of interests and that winning of Congressional help, by means of which measures vitally necessary to the great work in hand were secured, and which with less tact and sacrifice would have been lost.

And, with the country at large, with what consum-

mate divination and wisdom Lincoln now led, now met, now followed, but always grasped and held—making it the mighty backing of his administration—the public sentiment! Thank God it never lost faith in him!

The literature of Lincoln in his political and State papers is of the highest order, unsurpassed, if equalled. In temper and tone, in convincing force with at the same time regardful consideration of others' views, restrained in expression, never extravagant or offensive, and thus making his personal argument more effective, they are models at once of strength and tact and taste in the discussion of questions of State. The style of this graduate from a log cabin is consummate. His phrasing, his neat antithesis, his clearness of statement, his compelling argument, his choice of apt words, his telling metaphors and illustrations, and the exquisite framework of his prepared speech, always simple, yet always complete, gave to his masterpieces the rare excellence of the King James version of Holy Writ. David sang not with a purer cadence or a more exalted vision.

But far above the style is the spirit of that literature, the heart that inspired it, beating for all his fellow-men, even those who reviled him and said all manner of evil against him. His earlier public speeches, before his higher prominence, had often the broader flavor of the stump, and were attuned to attract and convince the popular environment to which he appealed. But in the great debate with Douglas and in the speeches of that time he began to strike higher chords. And, beginning with his Cooper Institute address and all through his State papers and formal

utterances, he rose to the height of the benediction and charity of the divine Master. The State papers of no other publicist in tone and spirit are so responsive to the pattern of Jesus. His appeals were forever to justice and fairness. He never lost sight of the other side. He gave full credit to its argument, its claims, its rights, its temptations, and its extenuations, whether he contended with it in debate or fought it in battle, yea, even in the very stress of the angry fire of treason and war. You cannot read him then that there sounds not in your ear the sweet accompaniment of a heavenly voice, saying, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise," "Judge not that ye be not judged," "Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you," "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

And yet this man was untutored in schools of divinity, save in the great school of nature's open providence and the Bible of the lowly fireside, caring for no theology save that of love to God and to his fellow-men. I love to think that in one of his successors the force of his example in this respect is manifest in the State papers, as also in the spirit, of the lamented McKinley, who, as those who were in close touch with him were always conscious, made himself a disciple of Lincoln and patterned him,—like him, alas! even in his martyr's death. May the same high and inspiring ideal be always the guiding star of those who rule our beloved land!

In that terrible struggle which involved the outrooting of human slavery, Lincoln never forgot that neither side was innocent of its existence among us, or that the people of the South believed in their cause and in

their construction of their rights under the Federal Constitution. To him they were the erring, not the malevolent, brother; and the moment they laid down their arms their sins were forgiven them. In the Cooper Institute speech, in the two nobly generous inaugurals, and, indeed, always, what charity, what reaching out of the welcoming hand, what appeal to every sentiment of brotherhood, what pleading for righteousness and peace and good will! To-day the South knows and feels all this. The mists and passions of half a century ago have faded away, and the memory of Lincoln shines like a star in the serene heaven of our Union in which it is our brightest link.

And shall not we of this new century rise as a nation to the ideal of that lofty time of which he became the incarnation,—the ideal of a republic not lost in material interests, great and important as they are; not blinded with the glare of prosperity, wide and comforting as it is; not bent on becoming a defiant world power, large as are the responsibilities that come with it; but devoted to righteousness as a people, to the eradication of every root of misery and wretchedness and injustice in our soil, and to the elevation of the humblest and poorest and weakest? Our apotheosis of Lincoln, even if exaggerated, should lift us out of the murk and stress and tumult of our time, and bring the jarring elements of our social and industrial life to a better understanding.

Had he lived, who does not feel that the reunion of the national heart would have far more speedily followed the reunion of political bands! Reconstruction was a most difficult problem, and the utmost

respect is to be had for the convictions of the great and patriotic men who differed as to its solution. But I cannot doubt that the ultimate verdict of disinterested consideration, free from the intense feeling of his time, will be with Lincoln. To him it was a practical, not a theoretical or sentimental, question. He did not regard it as worth while to determine nicely whether by their rebellion the Confederate States had lost their statehood in the Union or had remained in it. If the former, it is difficult to see why they had not accomplished all that they attempted. We fought to keep them in, and, if the victory was ours as it was, they were logically and in fact still States in the Union, though their relations with the national government were of course so disturbed and chaotic that legislation was necessary to readjust those relations and to safeguard all the interests involved. Such was undoubtedly Lincoln's view, but he was looking to conditions, not to theories. Beginning with Louisiana, as soon as a reasonably large portion of its citizens organized a State government, adopted a free constitution, confirmed the Thirteenth National Constitutional Amendment abolishing slavery, provided public schools for white and black, and empowered their legislature to give the suffrage to the colored man, he would have restored that State to its harmony in the Union. The example would have been followed in other States. No doubt the process of such reconstruction would have been accompanied by injustices to the freedmen; but the triumphant loyal majorities of the North would have safeguarded them, so that, whatever their hardships in the transition,

these would probably have been small compared with those that came under the course adopted after Lincoln's death. Ten years of a reconstruction rule that is a melancholy and disastrous period in our history would have been mitigated. The enmities of the war would have been quieted rather than accentuated. The increased prejudice arising against the negro from the natural bitterness of his former masters at being made his political subject, and rankling even to this day, would have been checked. Had Lincoln lived, with his hold on popular sentiment, with the prestige of his triumph over disunion, with his sagacity and persuasiveness, with his knowledge of the South and its responding appreciation of his charity towards it, it is not too much to believe that he would have made his policy the country's policy of reconstruction. Where he could not have wholly carried his point, he would have modified it without wholly sacrificing his views to those of the leaders of the more radical wing. But the result would have been, in the main, the carrying out of his. We should have been saved the bitter contentions of Congress with his successor, and the ship of state would have ridden into safe harbor with no mutiny on board and the captain in command.

Indeed, could Sumner have been conciliated to Lincoln's views, it would have been comparatively smooth sailing. Personal friends, their one main difference in the matter of reconstruction was as to the immediate bestowal of suffrage upon the negro. No plan would Sumner accept that did not give it. Any plan would Lincoln accept that would restore peace and the Union

and insure the rights of the negro in due season. To utilize his own homely illustration of the egg and the fowl, he would make sure of the fowl by hatching the egg rather than by smashing it; while Sumner, uncompromising in his high sense of supreme duty and single-eyed to what he regarded as absolutely right, would sooner smash the egg than have a chicken not fully fledged. It is interesting to think what would have been the course and outcome of the struggle between these two great leaders,—the great doctrinaire, who was contented only with the consummation of his convictions, though the heavens fell, and the great pacificator, who would secure the same ultimate justice, though he gave time to the heavens to clear. Again, it can hardly be doubted that the same patient tact, the same hold on the popular sentiment, the same persuasive appeal, the same winning sympathy with the plain people which had won the debate with Douglas, which through the war had gathered to Lincoln's support the constantly rising volume of the nation's faith and confidence, would have given him the guidance in the reconstruction of the Union.

The juster verdict of lapsing time recognizes the honest purpose of Lincoln's immediate successor in his views on reconstruction, which were perhaps not far removed from Lincoln's own. And yet there could be no more striking illustration than the contrast between the two men of that marvellous sense and wisdom which Lincoln never failed to bring to the solution of every entanglement. Not of him could it be said,

"Vis consili expers mole ruit sua."

His not the tomahawk of Metacom, but the persuasiveness of John Eliot.

You all know the story of Lincoln's death, that tragedy of the war. The rebellion was crushed, the war over, the slave free. The great prophet and magistrate had fought the good fight and kept the faith. The pistol bullet of a drunken, mad assassin cut the thread of life, and Abraham Lincoln was dead, a martyr on the altar of his country.

As we read history,—thank God, it is true rather of the past than the present,—what vice, what filth, what insolence, what grinding of the poor, what indifference to human suffering, what contempt of human rights, what rot and shame and meanness, have been the personal characteristics, though sometimes associated with great qualities and achievements, of most of the rulers of the world! What wonder that revolution has so often come in riot and rivers of blood! What a relief to turn to this chosen of the people without stain or spot, this pure in heart and blessed of the Lord! I love to picture in my mind's eye not more the ruler than the man. I fancy him at the consummation of his glory, the crown of honor lifted to his head not only by his country but by the world, yet simple and unaffected still. I fancy him standing beneath the stars on the heights of the Soldiers' Home, gazing over the roofs of Washington and across the historic Potomac, alone and lonely, dreaming not of his fame and prestige, but of the early pioneer days, the meagre honest home, the mother's devotion, the early struggles, the first revelations of the printed page, the first thrills of ambition for larger life, the growing

consciousness and exercise of natural powers, the free unconventional life of the prairie, the steady elevation to higher service, the people's tournament of debate, the long four years of chief magistracy of the nation, years tumultuous with war and intricate with statecraft, a nation in convulsion, an earthquake of rending forces, a fire sweeping the land, but after and above all the still small voice of an approving conscience at peace with God.

Not his that saddest of all historic destinies,—the fate of that mighty dynamo that once shook the world but at last stood an inert lump on a lone rock in mid-ocean,—“*coelum undique, et undique pontus*,”—his glories and principalities and powers now only dust in his hands, and his heart broken.

And how truly it may be said of Lincoln, he still lives! He lives in bronze and marble and canvas; he lives in the memory of a grateful country. His sympathy with the plain people, felt by him and by them, yet indescribable in words, has given him a place in their hearts closer than that of any other public man. He will stand with Washington foremost among our great ones. We lack discrimination when we say of this or that man that he was the greatest. But this may be said of Lincoln, that of all Americans, if not of all men of the nineteenth century, he achieved the most enduring, the greatest and purest fame. With neither the culture of Sumner nor the might of Webster, yet either of them in Lincoln's place you instinctively feel would have fallen below him in the discharge of his trust. No doubt his growth upward was largely due to his presidential culture and pruning, and that he was

a greater man at its close than at its beginning. And, when we speak of him as great, we mean great in the general impressive sense. There is a greatness of pure intellect, of pure force, independent of circumstances, like some tall memorial shaft springing from the earth to the sky. There is another greatness that is like some mountain-side rich with foliage and verdure, towering above the plain and yet a part of it. Lincoln, no doubt, in marvellous variety of talent comes short of Franklin, in quick fertility of genius of Hamilton, in philosophic vision of Jefferson. But in impressiveness on his time and in his stamp on history and public sentiment Lincoln leads. He is the great American of his age,

“New birth of our new soil, the First American.”

There is an element in this kind of popular greatness without which the title of great is never at last conferred. It is the moral element of sincerity and truth. There have been men who rendered inestimable services to their country, whose words were patriotic fire, whose shoulders upheld the republic, and yet there goes with their names the unspoken consciousness of a lack of entire faith in them. It is the singular glory of Lincoln that with all his ambition we feel he was true to the profoundest moral instincts. God be praised that amid all doubt and in spite of so many crumbling idols there be now and then—ay, often—a soul that mounts and keeps its place! Our tributes are not more to him personally than to the ideal of moral character which we have taught ourselves and are teaching our children that he stands for. There lie the true significance and value of our exaltation of him.

Honor to your memory, homely rail-splitter President, that no act or motive of yours has ever been counted in derogation of the integrity of your life or example. Good and faithful servant, stand forever forth in the people's hall of fame, crowned with their undying love and praise—sainted—immortal!

JUL 7 1910

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